

Overcoming Barriers to Breakfast

There may be one or more problems that result in low participation for your School Breakfast Program. This lesson is intended to provide you with solutions to a few common problems. Specific reasons for low participation in your school may not be addressed. If you would like ideas on how to overcome obstacles that are not listed here, contact a neighboring school, your State School Food Service Association, or your state agency.



- To identify barriers and solutions to breakfast participation
- To improve a poor school food service image
- To promote that the School Breakfast Program is available to all students
- To improve access to school breakfast and overcome time constraints



Target
Audience

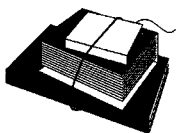
Food service manager and staff



Time

Lesson time: 15 minutes

Preparation time: 30 minutes to review the material and copy handouts



Materials

Overhead projector, flip chart or writing board

Handouts: Perception that School Breakfast is for Free and
Reduced Price Students
Poor School Food Service Image
Poor Accessibility or Lack of Time



Script

The script on the following pages is provided for your use. Notes to you are in ***bold italics***—they are not part of the script. Handouts may be made into transparencies or copied and distributed during your presentation.



Script

There are many factors that affect students' participation in the School Breakfast Program. Today we will discuss barriers to participation and ways to overcome those barriers. It is important for us to work together as a team to improve our breakfast program.

Students participate in our breakfast program for a variety of reasons. For some, it may be more convenient than eating at home. For others, they just love the food. We certainly understand the benefits of eating breakfast. Eating breakfast improves students' test scores, attendance and classroom behavior. But, have you noticed that there are a lot of students who never eat breakfast in the cafeteria and probably don't eat at home either? Why wouldn't students be breaking down our doors to get breakfast every morning? Why do you think kids don't eat breakfast at school? ***(Record reasons.)***

Those are understandable barriers to eating breakfast. What do you think are the main barriers to breakfast participation in our school? ***(Record barriers.)***

Now that we've identified barriers, let's try and come up with some solutions. ***(Display or hand out the appropriate solution sheet for your main barrier, if there is one. Either review the appropriate solution sheet with staff and ask for other ideas, or ask staff to brainstorm about possible solutions.)*** Out of all of the solutions we have discussed, which ones do you think we should try to implement? ***(Record responses.)***

How do you think we can put these solutions into action? ***(Have staff identify solutions they would like to try and implement to overcome the barriers to breakfast participation in your school. Fill out the Marketing/Promotion Action Plan in the Successful Marketing Strategies lesson in this section. Post this action plan so staff remember their assignments and the timeline.)***

(Don't forget to fill out an evaluation form for this lesson and mail it to your state agency.)

Barrier: Perception that School Breakfast is Only for Free and Reduced Price Students

To encourage participation by all students, try the following ideas...

- Develop a brochure or flyer that can be given out at orientation. This promotional piece could describe the convenience of the School Breakfast Program, outline the nutritional value of school breakfast, and include a cost comparison between school breakfast, breakfast at home, and breakfast at a local fast food restaurant. This brochure or flyer should be aimed at parents as well as students. Be sure to include information to let all students know that they can have both breakfast and lunch at school every day.
- Promote School Breakfast every day over the intercom or on the school radio station. Remind students that eating school breakfast every day is convenient, gives them energy for activities, a chance to socialize and will help them do better in school.
- Put a short announcement about the breakfast program on the school's answering machine. Include information about the types of food served, price, and convenience.
- Create or update a school web site to promote the benefits of the School Breakfast Program. Include breakfast menus on the web site.
- Send press releases to local papers or community newsletters before the start of the school year to notify parents that the School Breakfast Program is available to all students. Be sure to include information about the convenience, cost and nutritional value of school breakfast. Communicate with the paper on a regular basis, and use the paper to promote special events.

Barrier: Poor School Food Service Image

To improve the school food service image, try the following ideas...

- Improve customer service by maintaining a positive attitude when serving food. Train food service staff on customer service and problem solving skills. Have the food service staff select a new style of uniform for comfort, cleanliness, and attractive appearance.
- Survey students about their food preferences. There is a student breakfast assessment in the *Breakfast Assessment* lesson that can help identify what kids are eating for breakfast and where they are eating. Adjust the menu to reflect their suggestions, or occasionally serve special meals that contain favorite food items (especially for foods that may not fit into the menu on a regular basis). Promote that the menu has been altered to accommodate students' preferences. Finding little plate waste lets you know that you have served a menu that students like.
- Invite parents to school for breakfast. Offer a tour of the food service department. Have recipes available for parents to take home (adjust recipes to family-size portions and include a nutrient analysis to help promote the concept that school meals are healthy). Or, distribute favorite school breakfast menus and/or recipes during school open houses or parent-teacher meetings.
- Cater school or community breakfast events. Serve typical school breakfast menu items.
- Enlist the support of homeroom, health, science or physical education teachers so they will act as positive role models. Teachers can eat breakfast with students or discuss the importance of breakfast in class. Distribute menus to teachers so they can mention the foods served in school. For a lesson and activities that teachers or food service staff can use with students, refer to the *Fun with Breakfast* lesson in the Value of Breakfast section.
- Seek out publications (local newspapers, school papers, Parent Teacher Association newsletters, etc.) that will print small articles about the food service program. Communicate with them on a regular basis about the benefits of breakfast and about promotional meals or events held during breakfast.
- Give out free samples of breakfast items during lunch or during student break periods.
- Serve free breakfast to all school staff on the first day of school.

Barrier: Poor Accessibility or Lack of Time

To improve accessibility and overcome time constraints, try the following ideas...

- Use a different form of service. For example, the use of hallway vendor carts or other mobile-type carts offers a quick-stop for students. Hallway carts reflect a “user-friendly” concept. Carts can offer a fully reimbursable breakfast as well as a la carte items. Carts could be located near the building’s main entrance, student common areas or other gathering areas in the building. In one Philadelphia school district, breakfast participation increased by 40 percent with the use of carts.
- Allow students to eat in the classroom. Through classroom feeding, students can enjoy breakfast at their desks and listen to announcements or discuss current events. Students can pick up a bag breakfast and bring it into the classroom. Garbage cans can be set up in the hallway for custodians to pick up. This system has been successful at an elementary school in Minnesota.
- Most schools have found they only need 10-15 minutes to serve breakfast. Many have solved the problem by moving the bus schedule back as little as 5 or 10 minutes. Pre-portion as much food as possible, and offer bus drivers a complimentary breakfast.
- Rather than have students come to breakfast the first thing in the morning, offer breakfast later in the morning or between first and second class periods.
- Run two serving lines instead of one, or implement self-service stations. Information from schools offering self-service stations indicates that participation increases and students take reasonable-sized portions. Students aren’t making a mess, they are eating more fruits and vegetables and are moving faster than before. Try offering a variety of items in numerous serving areas.

Successful Marketing Strategies

By using marketing strategies and promotions, schools can generate an increase in breakfast participation. This lesson provides ideas on how to use marketing to attract students and staff to the cafeteria and how to organize promotions. Also included is a list of organizations that provide promotional materials free of charge or at a low cost. Some vendors offer appropriate promotional material. Marketing ideas and promotions work best if the entire food service team supports them.



- To establish marketing or promotion goals
- To design or plan a marketing promotion
- To implement successful marketing ideas or promotions
- To evaluate the results of the marketing strategy or promotion



Target
Audience

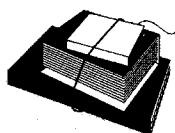
Food service manager and staff



Time

Lesson time: 30 minutes

Preparation time: 30 minutes to review the material and copy handouts



Materials

Overhead projector, flip chart or writing board

Handouts: Marketing Strategies to Increase Participation

Fun Breakfast Promotions

Calendar of Promotional Ideas

Marketing/Promotion Action Plan, Instructions and Evaluation

Food Service Resources

Additional Resource: *Managers Target Your Market* available through the American School Food Service Emporium at 800/728-0728.



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Script

Today we are going to talk about marketing and promoting our breakfast program. Why do you think we need to promote school breakfast? ***(Record responses.)*** There is obviously a need for marketing and promotions, so let's talk about how to do this.

First, we need to establish a goal(s). What do you think our goal should be? ***(Record responses. Examples of possible goals are kick off our breakfast program, increase student participation, or feature new menu items.)***

Now that we know our goal, we need to come up with some ideas about how to market or promote our program to meet this goal. ***(Display or hand out "Marketing Strategies to Increase Participation," "Fun Breakfast Promotions" and "Calendar of Promotional Ideas." Discuss each handout.)*** Here are some marketing strategies. I also have a list of promotional ideas and monthly themes. I need your help to decide on a marketing strategy or promotion that meets our needs. We can pick from the ones that are listed or we can create our own. We need to choose marketing ideas and promotions that we are comfortable with and that our students will accept. ***(As a group, review the handouts. Ask staff for additional ideas and record them.)*** Let's decide which marketing strategy or promotion we will use.

Good planning can lead to successful promotions. We may want to establish a team with food service staff, students, teachers, parents, administrators and faculty. We should meet periodically so team members can provide an update on the progress of the activities and brainstorm on ways to overcome obstacles. ***(Determine if you will establish a team.)*** We also need to advertise what we are doing. Advertising can be done over the PA system, in school newsletters, on flyers posted around the school, in press releases to the local media, etc. Advertising might help attract students and faculty to the cafeteria.

Now let's look at an action plan that will help get our ideas organized. ***(Display or hand out "Marketing/Promotion Action Plan and Instructions." Complete the plan according to the instructions and post in an area where all staff has access to it.)***

After we put this into action, we'll meet again to evaluate whether or not we met our goal, if the results were sustained, and what changes we could make next time. By making this a group effort,



Script

we can improve our School Breakfast Program and make it the best it's ever been. *(Either complete the "Marketing/Promotion Evaluation" or ask a staff member to complete the form. Discuss the results with food service staff upon completion of the activity and record suggestions for future use.)*

(See "Food Service Resources" for organizations that provide promotional materials free of charge or at a low cost.)

(Don't forget to fill out an evaluation form for this lesson and mail it to your state agency.)